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The Recession and its Effects on the Romance Genre

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For Professor Jane Denning

9 December 2009

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Publishing degree at Pace University

The Recession and its Effects on the Romance Genre

This past summer I had the pleasure of interning within Dorchester Publishing's editorial and marketing departments. Their small office on Madison Avenue in New York City permitted me to view the daily workings of each department within the company and the small staff that works there allowed me to pick their brains and be included in editorial and sales meetings each month. The company publishes romance, horror and thriller novels, and their sister company, Dorchester Media, publishes a diverse line of magazines. The company is home to two romance imprints -- Leisure and Love Spell -- and well as the Hard Case Crime and Family Doctor series.

Each morning, I had the job of deciding whether or not unsolicited submissions to the publishing company deserved special and immediate attention from Dorchester's various editors. Any proposed book that could be classified under the paranormal or fantasy romance genres was top priority for both Dorchester's Leisure and Love Spell imprints. This daily sorting process made me aware of the surge in submissions within these romantic subgenres to Dorchester since the start of the current economic recession, despite the highly publicized impending downfall of the publishing industry.

In this thesis I will delve into the reasons for the continued success of the romance genre in the midst of difficult economic times. I hope to show that this genre is growing in sales and popularity by looking at the success of romance novels, and how publishing

companies, such as Dorchester, are adapting to new publishing technology, including e-books and the Kindle. By looking at the measures that romance publishers, especially Dorchester, are taking to successfully blur the boundaries between romance and other genres to increase readership and ensure steady growth by opening up the eyes of loyal romance readers to various subgenres and introducing non-romance readers to genres within romance they never considered before, I hope to examine the vast publishing possibilities of the romance genre and its continuing positive success. Dorchester, Harlequin and Avon, among others, show no sign of slowing on their path to retrieve broader recognition and appreciation for their romance titles, and the multi-million dollar romance novel industry itself seems to be unstoppable in its sales growth and its success in expanding its subgenres.

The Romance Genre

The book publishing industry as a whole has seen many cutbacks since the start of the present economic recession. These include employee layoffs, consolidation of departments within companies, as well as major decreases in spending on luxuries, such as ritzy hotel rooms for authors and expensive office lunches. It is not just the smaller or independent publishing companies that are being forced to cut spending and employees, however. Time, Inc., who owns American Express Publishing, laid off "600 employees

last October. [...] The company has also put strict limitations on expense accounts" (culture). According to The New York Times:

Book sales have deteriorated since the beginning of October [2008], falling about 7 percent compared with the same period the previous year, according to Nielsen BookScan, which tracks about 70 percent of sales. That slide is driving much of the immediate cutbacks, but the publishing industry is also being convulsed by longer-term trends, including a shift toward digital reading and competition from an array of entertainment options like video games and online social networking (austerity).

The immense, ever-changing romance genre, however, has not faltered: "BookScan tracked romance sales as being up 2.4% against a down market in the first three months of this year; Harlequin has been doing particularly well with Q4 earnings up 32% (\$3 million) over the same time last year, indicating both series and non-series romance are going strong" (pimp). In fact, this popular genre, who's major publishers are Dorchester, Harlequin and Avon, has expanded in many cases into additional subgenres, such as the growing paranormal romance genre and the new fantasy romance genre, and has projected itself onto multiple bestseller lists, in both print and e-book form. "One of the many fascinating insights that Nicholson Baker provides in his recent piece on the Kindle, A New Page, for The New Yorker is what kind of e-books are most downloaded from Amazon. 'The success of the e-book is being fueled by the romance and erotic

romance market,' asserts Peter Smith in the TechoFile blog for ITworld [...]" (erotic novels). The current state of the economy appears to have aided in the success of romance books due to the escapism that it provides to its readers. "At a time when businesses and 401ks are failing, the thousands of romance titles published yearly can be depended upon to offer escapism on budget prices" (happy endings).

Dorchester's Leisure and Love Spell imprints are not the only imprints that put these popular novels on bookstore shelves. Many of the popular publishing companies we know of today also have imprints that publish romance novels. For example, Harlequin Enterprises Ltd. has Harlequin, Silhouette and Mills & Boon imprints, Random House has the Ballantine imprint, Pan Macmillan has Picador, St. Martin's Press and the Tor/Forge imprints, Simon & Schuster has Atria and Pocket Books, HarperCollins has Avon, Kensington Publishing Corporation has its Kensington and Zebra imprints, and Grand Central Publishing has its Forever imprint, just to name a few (getting to know). Avalon, LionHearted and Ellora's Cave, which is solely an online romance publisher, print romance novels as well.

Romance Readers

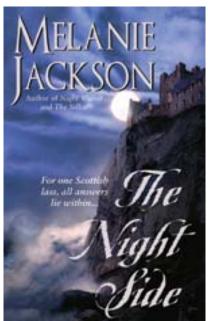
The readership of the romance genre, according to Romance Writers of America's 2009 Market Research Study on Romance Readers, consists of 29 million regular

readers; a figure that proves that 24.6% of the American population read a romance novel within this past year alone. These readers are mainly women aged 31-49 who are currently married or cohabitating with a partner, but romance does not discriminate (rwa). Laura Baumbach of MLR Press explains this:

"Just this month, the Romance Writers of America accepted a new chapter:
Rainbow Romance Writers, devoted to authors who write LGBT romance. And
New York publishing houses are publishing more mainstream stories with LGBT
characters; one is even experimenting with a line of gay historical novels
marketed to straight women. As a publisher of gay romance and fiction, I see a
wider appeal growing in that audience of straight women, traditionally the largest
consumer of romance novels. At the same time, in this age of expanding
legalization of gay marriage and a growing realization that love and romance are
for everyone, reading romance is even beginning to appeal to gay men" (hardcore).

This blurs the lines of readership not only across the nation, but across gender as well. Alyson Books, owned by Liberation Publications, is a publisher of books of interest to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered readers (alyson). Kensington, Akashic Books, Bold Strokes Books, Harrington Park Press and Bella Books are all publishers who are committed to publishing books by and for those of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities (hard-core).

Romance readers are often influenced to purchase romance novels because of their partiality to authors, descriptions of the book or recommendations from friends and acquaintances (rwa). However, the most common way that a romance reader learns about a new romance novel is through an advertisement within their current novel. Many romance publishers use this marketing effort to suggest a new author to current romance readers and to link new authors with authors whom are already established within the romance community to reach readers. For example, Dorchester Publishing used one of their strongest and most popular romance writers, Melanie Jackson, to promote numerous other upcoming novels. The last few pages of Jackson's novel "The Night Side" feature stunning reviews and a summary of an array of different romances, including a romantic suspense novel, a paranormal romance and a fantasy romance.



(dorchester)

These advertisements reach out to Melanie Jackson readers and encourage them to try a new genre or author also published by Dorchester. These advertisements appear in the last few pages of a novel, directly after the story ends. The author's name, title of the advertised novel, a brief summary, the ISBN number, information on how to buy the book, and often, a quote from a notable publication or author, is included.

Structure of a "Typical" Romance

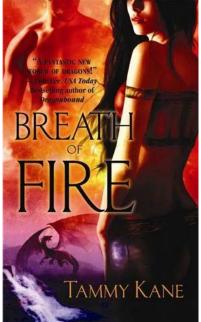
The romance novel as a whole has distinctive characteristics that separate a true romance from fiction books that simply have a romantic plot interweaved. Romance novels usually center on a powerful woman as the protagonist who is relatable to readers in some way, be it a situational nature or, more surprisingly, because of an imperfection. For example, in Katie MacAlister's *Sex and the Single Vampire*, the central female character is constantly challenged in life-or-death situations by a permanent limp she acquired after a car accident. MacAlister follows this trend of relating to readers in many of her books, making her stand out from the romance crowd. Also apart from the typical romance author is Mary Lou George, a successful author from BookStrand Publishing, who's overall rating on BookStrand.com is a 4.725 out of 5 (mary). George doesn't play up to the common misconception that all female characters in romance novels are damsels in distress:

"Mary Lou George is the successful author of the Paranormal Romance series, New Crescent. [...] Her current titles [...] center on the power of the female characters. Her heroines are independent women who accept when a man comes into their lives, but don't seek one out. George is steadfast in her belief that the romance genre has evolved to reflect the strength of females and gives women hope, endurance, and confidence in themselves" (happy endings).

According to Marjorie Liu, one of Dorchester's romance authors who is currently promoting her ninth installment to her *Dirk & Steele* series, a true romance is when "the hero and heroine are on a journey together, and no matter how awful it gets, by the end of the book they'll be in love, with the probability of a happy ending" (strange). Romance Writers of America seems to agree with Liu, as the association cites that "two basic elements comprise every romance novel: a central love story and an emotionally-satisfying and optimistic ending" (rwa). This central love story must be the main focus of the novel, even if there are multiple subplots, and the two, or more, romancing characters will have to face a struggle within their relationship. These characters will ultimately be rewarded for that struggle with each other's infallible, everlasting love at the end of the present novel or one of the next in the author's series. Though every romance contains these two crucial elements, there are many subgenres under the heading of romance that incorporate additional components to their story. Currently on the rise are both the fantasy romance and the paranormal romance subgenres.

Trends in Romance Publishing

Though the fantasy romance genre is often lumped together with the paranormal romance genre, there is, in fact, a whole "world" of difference between the two. A fantasy romance will include the main elements of a romance, but rather than focusing on the romancing couple itself like in paranormal romances, the novel will more specifically focus on the surrounding world that the couple exists in (strange). The world created especially for fantasy romances often takes on such an important role within the novel that it becomes, essentially, a main character as well. This occurs in new author Tammy Kane's novel, *Breath of Fire*, to be printed by Dorchester this year.



(dorchester)

RT Book Reviews rates the novel with 4 stars, and states that the novel is

"More than your typical paranormal romance, [it] is great storytelling. Kane creates an amazing world of dragons, ancient civilizations and histories rich with conflict... Strong and intelligent characters, sweeping seduction and a most original plot make this a book to relish and remember" (tammy).

The detailed dragon world that often depicts the sequence of events within this magical love story becomes such a major element of the story that it couldn't be left out without changing the entire plot. The ethereal worlds and mystical adventures created for fantasy romance novels are quite possibly the main reason that the subgenre is achieving its current success:

"Fantasy fiction engrosses readers because it involves them in problems that are so much worse than those faced by the typical modern person. Losing a job can pale in comparison to the threat of darkness overtaking the whole of Middle Earth in Tolkien's 'Lord of the Rings' trilogy" (fantasy).

In addition to Marjorie Lou and Tammy Kane, another powerful force within the fantasy romance genre is Dorchester's C. L. Wilson. Since her first book in her *Tairen*Souls series was published in 2007, Wilson has been noted as the first pioneer of fantasy romance and has since received numerous awards for her accomplishments, including the Romance Reviews Today Best Fantasy Romance Book of the Year, Colorado RWA's Award of Excellence for Best Paranormal/Time Travel/Fantasy/Futuristic category and two finalist nominations for the Golden Quill Award for Best Fantasy Romance, among

others, all in 2007 (CL). These awards have gained publicity for both Wilson and Dorchester.

"Along with the sales boost that can come from an award is the personal recognition and morale boost for all those involved. The prestige of winning can inspire staff to promote the book with more enthusiasm and give the title's marketing campaign new life" (independent).

The benefits of winning a book award include increased credibility, new material for press releases, increased visibility and a renewed enthusiam on the part of the sales and marketing team (independent). C. L. Wilson's four-book *Tairen Soul* fantasy romance series was sold in two volumes to Dorchester and were the lead titles in the company's Leisure imprint in October and November of 2007. These books have sold enough copies to make the best-seller lists and have opened doors for new fantasy authors as well as successfully switching strict fantasy readers into fantasy romance readers.

The paranormal romance subgenre has also recently experienced a tremendous surge in sales and published works: currently, 5/10 of Barnes and Noble's bestselling romance novels are of the paranormal subgenre (barnes). In fact, John Scognamiglio, Kensington's editor-in-chief, states that "paranormal romance [is] red hot and shows no signs of stopping. Anything paranormal is immediately moved to the top of the submissions pile" (strange). I found this exact process to be true at Dorchester during my daily duty of going through the submissions pile. This super genre can be defined as a

romance novel "with supernatural elements or [one] that departs from reality" (strange). However, because it is the most successful and most well-known type of paranormal romance, readers often believe that a paranormal romance must be a vampire romance to be considered as such. On the contrary, bookshelves are seeing many additional attributes of the paranormal romance subgenre, including, but not limited to, werewolves, shape shifters, witches, demons, psychics and time travel. This subgenre has become so much of a force in itself that the tremendous Penguin Group has added Project Paranormal, a video channel dedicated specifically to the subgenre, to its recently developed online network, "From the Publisher's Office." This online series was created "to give more exposure to underserved books and authors often overlooked by mainstream media" (penguin).

The attributes of the paranormal romance genre have spilled over into many other genres, such as fantasy, mystery and science fiction, and is often found being incorporated into these sections of bookstores. Unfortunately, non-romance readers often shy away from the romance section in bookstores and only stick to buying from display racks and from their native sections (strange). Candy, of the blog *Smart Bitches, Trashy Books*, states, "I do know that there's a tendency to make assumptions about people's intelligence based on what they're reading [...] Romance novels make people intensely uncomfortable, which they express as deep disdain and/or complete dismissal." If readers can look past the common cover art of romance novels – a fancy dress and an

averted woman's face for a historical romance, the sexy muscular man spread out across the paranormal romance covers, and the extra-girlie abstract item, such as a stiletto or a lipstick case on a contemporary romance cover – readers may be surprised to find that the romance genre has much more to offer than just ditzy blonde characters and foreseeable outcomes. This is reiterated in a blog by Kassia Krozser that is dedicated to analyzing the actions and inactions of the publishing industry:

"It's hard to get that reader to cross the tracks [...] The publishing business would do well [...] if it spent more time trying to get readers to cross genres, to cross aisles, to try things that they wouldn't suspect are tasty. Because if that first bite is all the reader could ask — familiar yet intriguingly different — then there might be additional experimentation" (aisle).

Dorchester should take this advice into serious consideration. Romance readers appear to be taking to the meshing of genres the best, as half of the readers polled in Romance Writers of America's 2009 Market Research Study on Romance Readers are "extremely likely" to branch out and try new subgenres within the romance genre. Luckily for romance authors, "70% [of romance readers] are likely to follow an author they like into a new subgenre." This open-mindedness within the romance reader population is especially great for authors that have taken the leap and merged from romance into a new genre, such as Dorchester's Anna DeStefano, who has recently published her first single-title paranormal romance, *Dark Legacy*, after publishing

multiple non-paranormal romance series.

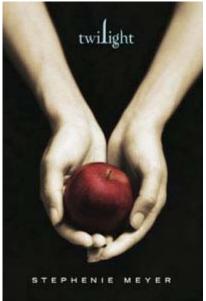
The paranormal romance subgenre, however, did not just spring up out of nowhere. Dorchester's Senior Editor, Chris Keesler, believes that the "rise of the supernatural across the entertainment spectrum has exerted a strong influence, creating a hunger for similar books" (strange). Paranormal-based television programs, such as the new *True Blood* series, adapted from Charlaine Harris' novels, are targeted at both sexes in their 20's and 30's, expanding the paranormal audience across genders and age groups. This broader audience and the mass appeal of shows like *True Blood*, *The Vampire Diaries* and the well-known *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* television series ensures that the genre will have a long, successful life. Even more popular than these hit television shows is the four-novel *Twilight* series by Stephenie Meyer.

"Once she meets the mysterious and alluring Edward Cullen, Isabella's life takes a thrilling and terrifying turn. Up until now, Edward has managed to keep his vampire identity a secret in the small community he lives in, but now nobody is safe, especially Isabella, the person Edward holds most dear. The lovers find themselves balanced precariously on the point of a knife -- between desire and danger" (twilight).

According to a blog post on TwilightersAnonymous.com from August 3rd, 2009, "the Twilight books have stayed in the [USA TODAY's Best-Selling Book List's] top 10 for 52 consecutive weeks. [The books] held the first four spots a total of 13 weeks in the past

year." From StephenieMeyer.com, readers can learn:

"Twilight was one of 2005's most talked about novels and within weeks of its release the book debuted at #5 on The New York Times bestseller list. Among its many accolades, Twilight was named an 'ALA Top Ten Books for Young Adults' on Amazon.com, 'Best Book of the Decade...So Far,' and a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year. The highly-anticipated sequel, New Moon, was released in September 2006, and spent more than 25 weeks at the #1 position on The New York Times bestseller list."



(stephenie)

Recently turned into a motion picture, *Twilight* grossed \$70 million in its opening weekend, proving that "paranormal romance -- like romance in general -- is doing extremely well during a period [of economic distress.] 'What's going on in the world

now has an impact. With wars and the economy, romance is fantasy -- [it is] the ultimate escape' (strange)."

The need for escapism through reading is old news, however. The United States also saw a gigantic surge in the sales of romance titles back during the Great Depression. In a 1933 issue of Publishers Weekly, it was written that:

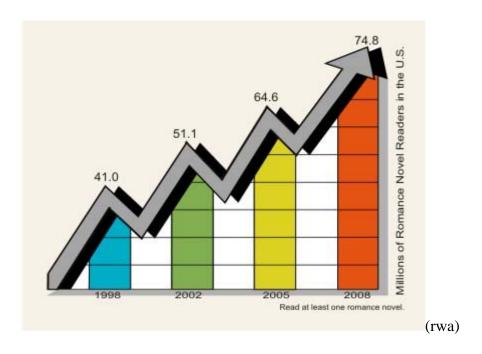
"The reading of books has increased throughout the Depression [...] Our fellow Americans were reaching for [books] to help them cope with the economic meltdown of the 1930s. [...] Women, then as now, were turning to chick lit" (depression).

Chick lit, a subgenre of romance mainly written for women by women that encompasses a light and humorous tone and often delves into female life issues, is well known for its feel-good tone and guilty-pleasure nature. Popular chick lit includes the *Shopaholic* series by Sophie Kinchella (recently made into a feature film starring Isla Fisher) and Lauren Weinberger's "The Devil Wears Prada," which was also turned into a blockbuster hit starring Meryl Streep and Anne Hathaway (chicklit). In the same 1933 issue of *Publishers Weekly*, it is written that:

"The reading of books has increased throughout the Depression as shown by library circulation records.' At a quick glance, the popular books Americans were reading in the early 1930s — either by taking them out of public libraries, borrowing them from the now-extinct bookstore rental libraries, or buying them

— look a lot like the mass market offerings of 2009" (depression).

As sales in the publishing industry overall keep dropping, niche books, such as romance and its subgenres, have an increasing amount of readers. This could in part be due to the low prices of romance paperbacks to begin with – normally from \$3.99 to \$7.99 per book — but I believe that it is the escapism that is offered within the pages, and not what is listed on the back cover, that can be commended for the genre's success.



"In tough times, people [are] looking to be stimulated by something else: tall tales of lusty love. Even as the markets are suffering, the market for romance is growing [...] At Barnes & Noble, while overall sales are down, romance novel sales are up [...] One company not surprised by the spike in sales -- Harlequin --

the finest of the forbidden, [who's] sales are up 32% from last year [in 2008]" (sales).

Experts within the romance genre explain that "the genre does so well because the themes stretch across all cultures [...] 'It's really a fascinating area because romances provide you with a snapshot of culture and courting rituals and life at a certain period" (enthusiasts). Collected from the latest survey sponsored by the National Endowment for the Arts, *Reading on the Rise*, "reading [...] increased among all races [since 2002], with notable improvement among Hispanics and African-Americans" (more americans). Not only is reading increasing within those nationalities, but since the rise in publishing of Muslim romances, the Middle-Eastern nationalities have seen a surge in reading as well:

"The best-selling novel *Ayat-ayat Cinta* (Love Verses) [written by Habiburrahman El Shirazy and published by Republika] has sparked public enthusiasm in other 'Islamic romance fiction.' [...] 'The novel [...] is relaxing, easy to read but on the other side it is capable of enlightening readers with Islamic values.' [...] Besides Islamic romance fiction, biographical books featuring love stories involving eminent Muslim figures have also made a splash in literary circles, outselling major Islamic texts. Publisher of "Pena," a book on the life of the Prophet Muhammad's wife Aisyah, said biographies with a high romance content were appealing to female readers, including some who wouldn't normally

be interested in religious books. 'We see female book lovers commonly enjoy reading love stories, so we think why not try to have more people read Islamic books by publishing love stories of Muslim figures,' said Pena's marketing director [...]" (islamic).

Within the imperfections of Katie MacAlister's protagonists and the incorporation of traditional culture in Islamic romance novels, there is validity to the fact that readers are drawn to stories, characters and themes that they can relate to. "We can all relate to a love story. 'When you get together with your friends and you talk about [...] who's cute and who's not or how your relationship's doing or what the problems in your marriage are, [...] [these are] narratives of romance'" (enthusiasts).

Technology and the Romance Genre

It is no secret that the publishing industry is in the midst of great change. Despite lay-offs, financial cutbacks and a sump in printed book sales, there is one type of book that is selling in great numbers across all genres and continents: e-books. With devices like the popular Sony Reader – who's "sell-through is strong," a new French e-reader -- The Bookeen, which will become available in the U.S. market in June 2009, and the iPhone e-book application -- Stanza, which was recently acquired by Amazon, there are hundreds of thousands of digital titles that are available to over 60 countries for reading

(drm).

The International Digital Publishing Forum's annual digital book conference focused a lot this year on the success and the projected growth of the digital book market. In one panel dedicated to emerging e-book businesses, an interesting strategy to sell print books was discussed:

"O'Reilly Media's Andrew Savikas said that while overall sales of O'Reilly's print computer books were down about 20%, e-book sales were up. E-book sales are about 10% of all sales made through the O'Reilly website and Savikas outlined an O'Reilly strategy to bundle print titles with e-book editions (in PDF, Kindle and Mobipocket formats) with no DRM (and lifetime free updates) at a discounted price point. 'E-books are a small market, but they are catching up. Sales are doubling about every 18 months,' he said. Savikas said e-books sales help drive print sales [...]" (drm).

O'Reilly Media isn't the only company using the high demand for digital books as a new means to generate sales to their advantage, though. Leading romance publisher Harlequin has started publishing more e-books per month than print books, totaling about 140 electronic titles per month, and giving the option of receiving snippets of romance books via cell phone because it's what their readers want. "'Our readers want e-books,' said [Malle] Vallik, [Harlequin's director of digital content.] 'Readers want interoperability, more titles, nicely designed devices, adjustable fonts and blurbs for

fiction" (drm). Dorchester Publishing also offers an electronic dose of romance. The company offers a romance e-newsletter, Sexy Snippets, which sends out the steamiest scenes from their printed romance novels.

Other publishers have started to publish solely e-book titles because of the popularity of digital reading, including Ravenous Romance and Ellora's Cave Publishing. On December 1st, 2008, Ravenous Romance began publishing novel-length erotic romance books on a daily basis in e-book and MP3 formats, as well as releasing a "Ravenous Rendezvous" short story in these formats every day as well (new e-book). The success of e-publishing and the vast opportunities that it offers is the reason for the existence of Ellora's Cave Publishing Inc.:

"In 2000, Tina Engler was frustrated by her inability to sell her manuscripts to traditional publishing houses. So she decided to do it herself, setting up a Web site and writing erotic romance under the pseudonym Jaid Black. She solicited the works of other authors and began distributing them, as well" (writ).

The availability of romance titles in digital formats has definitely aided in the popularity and increase in sales within the genre. Not only are printed romance books making their mark on best-seller lists, such like on the current Barnes & Noble best-selling romance titles list, but romance novels in the e-book format are also becoming popular buys. In June of 2009,

"The best-selling book in Amazon.com's Kindle store [wasn't] one of the

nonfiction titles battling for top spot on the New York Times best-seller list (Mark R. Levin's "Liberty and Tyranny" and Malcolm Gladwell's "Outliers"). Neither [was] it the hot new thriller (Michael Connelly's "The Scarecrow") or the novel that has spent a year on the paperback list (William P. Young's "The Shack"). It's "Deception" by Sharon Cullen, a passionate novel of romantic suspense" (finding).

The common conclusion that romance readers have come to that explains the rapid growth of the romance genre in e-book format is simple: with an e-book, there is no way of anyone else knowing what is being read. Therefore, embarrassment that usually came with purchasing a romance novel at a bookstore counter with a sensual cover or with reading that same book in public places is now masked by the electronic device that only displays a view of the specific page that is being read. The e-reader is the solution for men and women who have experienced the hazards of buying or reading romance books in public. Romance readers have stated "A checkout clerk 'even made sarcastic remarks to me at the register in front of customers and other cashiers," "I'll squeeze the romance book in between the other books I'm buying when I get to the register so it's not as obvious," "When I'm sitting in my beach chair at the ocean I'm always trying to hide the cover of my paperback," "I'll admit that one of the determining factors in purchasing a Kindle was that it allows me to read books at work and in public discreetly" and "I have read more romance novels on the Kindle than I had done before and have downloaded

and read a couple of free books that I would not have touched in conventional form" (finding). With the stigma associated with the romance novel, its contents and its covers, readers often stayed away from the romance section in bookstores in fear of judgment and weren't open-minded to "crossing the aisle" and experimenting with a new romance author or romantic subgenre. The development of the e-book has eliminated this judgment and has allowed for readers to browse, purchase and read romance novels of all subgenres in privacy, which is exactly what readers wanted.

The Future of the Romance Genre

Publishing houses know that they must give their readers what they want in order to succeed. Leaders in the romance publishing sector have catered to their readers by offering numerous romance titles per month in multiple formats, gained new readers by experimenting in subgenres, such as the new paranormal and fantasy romances, that cross over into the mystery, sci-fi, and historical sections of bookstores, and also have reached out to readers through e-newsletters, romance blogs and comprehensive online bookstores. Dorchester Publishing, though not the leader in the romance market, has kept up with their competition by releasing romance novels of various subgenres each month so every reader is satisfied. The company has welcomed the surge of demand for paranormal and fantasy romances by giving serious consideration to all submissions

within these subgenres and by avidly marketing these titles through their website, media kits and press releases. Dorchester has a romance blog written by one of their editors, Leah Hultenschmidt, and provides links to other romance blogs to offer readers more insight and information on the industry. In a time of great change within the industry itself and the technology available to the industry, Dorchester Publishing has succeeded in satisfying my demand for quality romance novels in both print and digital forms, and based on the success of their titles, it is proof that they are definitely not only keeping up with their competition in Harlequin and other publishers, but they are leaving in their wake a diverse list of romance novels that even skeptics of the genre will find themselves enjoying.

In times of economic despair, such as the current recession, people search for a way to forget their troubles and escape to a world with an inevitable happy ending. During this recession, as in the Great Depression, a trend has emerged that provides this sense of escapism while not costing a lot of money. The romance novel offers uplifting plot lines, strong relatable characters and a cover price under ten dollars, which explains why the romance novel is in popular demand in both print and digital formats at present. The genre shows no signs of slowing in their success, either, as promising upcoming titles at both Harlequin and Dorchester, including Stephanie Rowe's *Chill*, the sequel to her July 2009 release, *Ice*, and *Divorced*, *Desperate and Deceived* by Christie Craig have yet to be discovered (dorchester).

My internship experience at Dorchester Publishing exposed me to the romance genre from various perspectives, including as a reader, an editor and a member of a marketing team. As a reader, I learned that there is definitely more to romance novels than just sappy love scenes; there is conflict and imperfect characters and the need to find happiness and escape in a world apart from your own. From the editorial seat, I learned that a great romance novel will be relatable to the reader and always promises a story that is creatively weaved to leave the reader satisfied, or waiting for the sequel. Finally, from a marketing standpoint, I learned that, most importantly, publishing companies need to stay ahead of their competition in terms of technology and trends. To do so, companies need to do research and stay informed, and make sure to adapt to whatever changes come their way. The romance genre has definitely provided readers with a way to escape their normal lives during this recession by publishing novels with all of the above attributes, and by offering these novels to readers in the newest electronic formats and markets for publicity. This genre has absolutely succeeded in the face of the changing publishing industry, and it has the means to continue to do so.

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